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ABSTRACT

Mental well-being is as important as physical well-being for sound life of man, and perhaps even more important, since physical illnesses are related in varying degrees to psychological problems. Modern psychology emphasizes essential criteria for mental health and well-being. These include positive relationships with others, productivity and striving, responsibility, self-control, relative freedom from tension and anxiety, satisfaction with roles in life and life enjoyment. Fourteen centuries ago the Holy Quran and the "hadith" of Prophet Muhamad outlined the same essential criteria in detail. In social relationships Islam urges people to maintain positive behavior such as good character, altruism, forgiveness, fulfillment of obligations, justice and fairness. Islam instructs followers to avoid negative social behavior such as aggressiveness and hostility, speaking behind others, suspicion, ridicule, arrogance, pridefulness, contradiction and falsehood. Islam teaches that these values help develop a healthy personality, which strives for reward from Allah both in this world and in the hereafter. (LLL)

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"ISLAMIC VALUES AND MENTAL HEALTH"

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ABSTRACT

Modern psychology emphasizes essential criteria for mental health and well being such as positive relationship with others; productivity and striving; responsibility; self control; relative freedom from tension and anxiety ; satisfaction with roles in life and life enjoyment.

Fourteen centuries ago the Holy Quran and the hadith of Prophet Muhamad (peace be upon him) outlined the same essential criteria in clear detail. For example, in social relationships Islam urged people to maintain positive behaviour such as good character; altruism; and concern about people's welfare; consultation with others; forgiveness; fulfillment of obligations and justice and fairness. Islam instructs us to avoid negative social behaviour such as aggressiveness and hostility; speaking behind others; suspiscion; ridicule; arrogance and pridefullness; contradiction and and falsehood.

Thus, Islamic instructions are full of values that help develope a healthy personality which strives for reward from Allah both in this world and in the hereafter.

Islamic Values and Mental Health

Mental well being is as important as physical well being for sound life of man and perhaps even more important, since physical illnesses are related in varying degrees to psychological problems.

The definitions of normality and abnormality in different aspects of life in different societies, from the primitive to relatively advanced societies in different periods of time, depends on the values, norms, and the traditions of the specific society.

Values of heavenly religions come from God through His Prophets, while secular norms and traditions are usually based on the opinions of famous philosophers, and wise men of the society, therefore they are subject to change.

Psychologists and psychiatrists in our present scientific era place emphasis on certain basic criteria as necessary signs of an individual's mental well being.

Some of these criteria which are well known among psychologists are mentioned in Karl Menninger, and George Preston's definitions of mental health (Thackeray, et al. 1979), and what Goldenson (1970) referred to in his Encyclopedia of Human Behavior, and are as follows:

I. Positive relationships with others.

II. Productivity and striving.

III. Responsibility.

IV. Self control and relative freedom from tension and anxiety.

V. Satisfaction with roles in life.

VI. Life enjoyment.

The Holy Quran which was revealed by Almighty God to Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), contains a complete life program full of values and criteria, that assured normal behavior in different fields of Islamic society.

The "hadith" (traditions) of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) interpreted and explained what was written in the Holy Quran.

If we contemplate the criteria and elements of mental health which were mentioned above, we will find that they are already assured in the Holy Quran and Prophet's "hadith" as follows:

I. Positive Relationships With Others

Many verses in the Holy Quran and the "hadith" exhorted people to pursue desirable behavior. Specific verses and "hadith" instructed or ordered people to avoid unacceptable behavior. The goal in both cases of pursuing or avoiding was to maintain positive relationships among people as follows:

1. Encouragement of Positive Conduct

(a) Good Character

With fine character any situation may be mastered in every place and at all times. Such character

touches the heart and arouses the positive component of human beings. God said to Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him):

"And thou (standest) on an exalted standard of character."

".... Wert thou severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about thee: so pass over (Their faults), and ask for (God's) forgiveness for them, and consult them in affairs....."[2]

"Nor can Goodness and Evil Be equal. Rebel (Evil) with what is better: Then will be between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate."[3]

Two of Prophet Mohammed's hadeeth about good character are: "The believers who have perfect beliefs are those with better character...."[4]

"The one who is deprived from gentleness is also deprived from all welfares."[5]

(b) **Altruism and Concern about People's Welfare.** Love relationships between people generate confidence, security, and comfortable feelings among them. It is well known, that these feelings help to implant important bases of mental health.

In describing believer's character of alturism Almighty God said:

"....But give them preference over themselves, even

though poverty was their (own lot)...."[6]

"And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive."[7]

God also said preaching the believers:

"By no means shall ye attain righteousness unless ye give (freely) of that which ye love; and whatever ye give, of truth God knoweth it well."[8]

Prophet Mohammed's hadith concerning love among people are: "You will not enter the paradise until you believe in God, and will not believe until you love each other...."[9]

"No one will believe in God until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."[10]

(c) **Consultation with Others**

God urged Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) to consult the believers in different opinions and affairs before making decisions, by saying:

".... and consult them in affairs (of moment) ...."[11]

He also said describing the believers:

"Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer, who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation."[12]

(d) **Forgiveness**

God asked for forgiveness among people by saying:

".... let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that God should forgive you? For God is Oft-

Forgiving, Most Merciful."[13]

He also said addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him):

".... so overlook (any humam faults) with gracious forgiveness."[14]

No doubt that forgiveness among people has good effects upon themselves, where comfortable feeling, thankfulness, and happiness could be noticed on both sides - the one who forgives and the receiver. While not being able to forgive generates feeling of frustration, rejection, maliciousness, and may lead to severe conflicts.

(e) **Fulfilment of Obligations and Engagements**

Almighty God addressed people:

".... and fulfil (Every) engagement, for (every) engagement will be enquired into (On the day of Reckoning)."[15]

"Ye who believe fulfill (all) obligations."[16]

"Fulfil the Covenant of God when ye have entered into it, and break not your oaths after ye have confirmed them; Indeed ye have made God your surety; for God knoweth all that ye do"[17]

In dealing with social and economic affairs, fulfillment of engagements and obligations are prominent commitments. With such fulfillment there will be assurance of rightness which generates welfare and

blessing with deep feelings of security that also helps achieve prosperity. Beside urging the believers to fulfill commitments among each other, God orders the believers to keep the same fulfillment with the pagans by saying:

"How can there be a league before God and His Apostle, with the pagans, except those with whom ye made a treaty near the Sacred Mosque? As long as these stand true to you, stand ye true to them. For God doth love the righteous."[18]

(f) **Justice and Fairness**

Justice and fairness reflect balanced and stable conduct and contain thoughtfulness and consideration. Islam emphasized these elements of good behavior among all people, rich, and poor, great, and lowly, Moslem and non-Moslem. Almighty God said:

"O ye who believe stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is Next to Piety: and fear God for God is well acquainted with all that ye do"[19]

"....Whenever ye speak, speak justly even if a near relative...."[20]

2. **Avoidance of Negative Behavior**

(a) **Aggressiveness and Hostility**

It is well known that aggressive act is one symptom of most psychological disturbances, and it is also a marked sign of adolescents' maladjustment.

In all types of aggressive acts whether it is physical, or mental; direct or indirect the relationship among people is one of suffering and is often broken.

Almighty God urged the believers to avoid aggression:

"....Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour...."[21]

"God loveth not that evil should be noised abroad in public speach, except where injustice hath been done; for God is He who heareth and knoweth all things."[22]

As we have seen in the previous verse, God allowed aggressiveness in cases of persecution, but he also emphasized upon forgiveness in case of injustice as He addressed the believers:

"And if yo do catch them out, catch no worse than they catch you out: But if ye show patience that is indeed the best (course) for those who are patient."[23]

"The recompense for an injury is an injury equal there to (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God: for (God) loveth not those who do wrong."[24]

Hadith of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) on rejection of aggression were:

"Do not hate, envy, reject, or estrange each other, but be brothers and it is not permitted for the Moslem to desert his brother more than three days."[25]

"The believer is the one who does not stab, curse, exceed, or revile."[26]

(b) **Alghiba (speaking behind brothers)**

Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) asked the believers: "Do you know what is **alghiba**?" The believers answered: "God and His Messenger know better." The Prophet said: "**alghiba** is to talk about your brother some talk that he hates." A believer asked: "But if what I talked behind my brother was true?" The Prophet said: "If what you talked behind your brother was true that is **alghiba**, and if it was not true that is slander."[27]

Almighty God said to the believers:

"....And spy not on each other, Nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother? Nay, ye would abhor it. But Fear God."[28]

In order to avoid **alghiba** and it's bad effect on relationships, God prohibited it strongly as we have seen in the previous glorious verse. He described **alghiba** as an act that a man abhors to do like eating

the flesh of his dead brother. It is obvious that alghiba causes poor relationships among people, and it may evoke strong negative emotions such as despisement and hatred.

(c) **Suspicion**

Suspicion is often accompanied by incorrect and wrong ideas and encourages maliciousness. Suspicion may therefore result in shaky and insecure relationships. Almighty God prohibited suspicion by saying:

"O ye who believe avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion in some cases is a sin...."[29]

(d) **Ridicule**

The negative elements of ridicule are disrespect, and belittlement; therefore it may elicit aggressive and hateful feelings. Almighty God prohibited such behavior by saying:

"O ye who believe let not some men among you laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former). Nor let some women laugh at others: It may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other, nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames...."[30]

Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) said:

"No wickedness is like that of belittling a Moslem brother"[31]

(e) **Arrogance and Pridefulness**

Arrogant behavior is resented by others. The arrogant may suffer rejection, but he may stubbornly continue the manifestation of such acts which enhance his suffering, leading to a more complicated condition.

Almighty God wants welfare for all people, so He prohibited such behavior by saying:

"And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolensce through the earth; for God loveth not any arrogant boaster."[32]

Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) said:

"Any one who has a very tiny particle of arrogance in his heart will not enter Paradise"[33]

(f) **Contradiction**

Contradiction between doing and saying indicates unstable and weak values. It also leads to deceiving acts. A man with such traits is often rejected by others. God rebuked people who showed contradictory actions by saying:

"O ye who believe why say ye that which ye do not? Grievously odious is it in the sight of God that ye say that which ye do not."[34]

The Almighty God makes clear the end of those who pretend something and do something else for He says in the Quran:

"Think not that those who exult in what they have

brought about, and love to be praised for what they have not done - think not that they can escape the penalty...."[35]

(g) Falsehood

Falsehood, or lying is a social illness that abuses others as well as the self. God ordered believers to avoid lying and said:

"....And shun the word that is false."[36]

Almighty God also described the believers who are free of falsehood by saying:

"Those who witness no falsehood and, if they pass by futility they pass by it with honorable (avoidance)."[37]

II. Productivity and Striving

Productivity as an element of mental health achieved through good deeds and striving. Almighty God emphasized striving for living, so He said:

"It is He who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy the sustenance which He furnishes...."[38]

"That which is on earth we have made but as a glittering show for the earth, In order that we may test them as to which of them are best in conduct."[39]

"That man can have nothing but what he strives for."[40]

"And say: Work (righteousness): Soon will God observe your

work, and His Apostle, and the believers: Soon will ye be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open: Then will He show you the truth of all that ye did."[41]

"Say: Shall we tell you of those who lose most in respect of their deeds? Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works"

One of Prophet Mohammed's (peace be upon him) hadith about working hard for living and not relying on others, is:

"If one gathers firewood and carries it on his back, is better than asking charity from others who might answer, or might not answer."[43]

III. Responsibility

Taking responsibility in different fields of life as important element of mental health was encouraged by Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him), who said:

"Every one of you is shepherds and all of you is responsible for his flock. The Emam is shepherd, and he is responsible for his flock. The man is a shepherd of his family and he is responsible for his flock. The woman is the shepherd in her husband's house and she is responsible for her flock. The servant is the shepherd in the property of his master and he is responsible for his flock. All of you are shepherds and responsible for the flock."[44]

IV. Self Control and Relative Freedom from Tension and Anxiety

Self restrain from rashness during crisis as one trait of

normal personality, was emphasized in the Holy Quran. God said describing and praising the believers:

"Those who spend (freely) whether in prosperity or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for God loves those who do good."[45]

About self control Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) said:

"The strong person is not the conqueror, but the strong is who controls himself in anger."[46]

Almighty God emphasized the importance of not being tense or distressed. He advised Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) to be patient with satisfaction, and not be annoyed by the infidel's injuries toward him. Allah says in the Quran:

"Therefore do thou hold patience - a patience of beautiful (contentment)."[47]

He also advises the Prophet to deal with the infidels in a nice way by showing high standard of conduct, so He said:

"And have patience with what they say, and leave them with noble (dignity)."[48]

Concerning forgiveness Almighty God also advised the Prophet to forgive others humbly, and without any rancour or hatered, or contemptibleness, so He said:

"....So overlook (any human faults) with gracious forgiveness."[49]

On the top rank of the secure, stable, and well balanced

self, comes the one who achieved righteousness satisfactorilly, and satisfied God, as He said:

"(To the righteous soul will be said:)

O (thou) soul In (complete) rest and satisfaction come back thou to thy Lord well pleased (thyself), and well pleasing Unto Him. Enter thou, then among my Devotees yea enter thou My Heaven."[50]

V. **Satisfaction with One's Roles in Life**

Individual's satisfaction with his fate in life, his social, or economic status, is a condition of mental health which was ensured in Islamic teachings. God forbids man to covet what others had gained. It is a condition of envy that contains discontentment and ill will. Such bad feeling effects individual's endeavor to achieve creatively and attain by means of his real existing capacities, therefore God said:

"And in no wise covet those things in which God Hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn...."[51]

VI. **Life Enjoyment**

Psychologists consider life enjoyment as an aspect of mental health. Islam emphasized moderate life enjoyment where God said:

"O children of Adam wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by

excess, for God loveth not the wasters. Say who hath forbidden the beautiful (gifts) of God which He hath produced for his servants, and the thing, clean and pure (which He hath provided) for sustenance? Say: They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, (and) purely for them on the Day of Judgement. Thus do we Explain the signs in detail for those who understand."[53]

Prophet Mohammed's (peace be upon him) hadeeth on enjoyments of life includes the following:

"God loves to see the trace of His bestowal upon his servants."[54]

These are brief aspects of mental health the Islam has ensured in its teachings in the Holy Quran and the noble hadith of Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him). Modern day psychology contains some of the very basics of mental health guidelines established in the Quran and the Sunnah of the prophet. Further research and analysis in this area will enhance our understanding of Islamic values as they relate to mental health.

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Notes

1. The Holy Quran Sura LXVIII:Qalam. verse 4
2. The Holy Quran III: Al-i-Imran verse 159.
3. The Holy Quran XLI:Ha-Mim. verse 34.
4. Alnawawi (1979) p.240
5. Alnawawi (1979) p.243
6. The Holy Quran Sura LIX:Hasher. verse 9.
7. The Holy Quran LXXVI:Dahr. verse 8.
8. The Holy Quran AL-i-Imran. verse 92.
9. Alnawawi (1979) p.304
10. Alnawawi (1979) p.86
11. The Holy Quran Sura III:Imran. verse 159.
12. The Holy Quran Sura XLII:Shura. verse 38.
13. The Holy Quran Sura XXIV:Nur. verse 22.
14. The Holy Quran Sura XV:Hijr. verse 85.
15. The Holy Quran Sura XVII:Bani Israil. verse 34
16. The Holy Quran Sura V:Maida. verse 1.
17. The Holy Quran Sura XVI:Nahl. verse 91
18. The Holy Quran Sura IX:Tauba. verse 7.
19. The Holy Quran Sura V:Maida. verse 9.
20. The Holy Quran Sura VI:Anam. verse 152.
21. The Holy Quran Sura V:Maida. verse 3.
22. The Holy Quran Sura IV:Nisaa. verse 148.
23. The Holy Quran Sura XVI:Nahl verse 126.
24. The Holy Quran Sura XLII:Shura. verse 40.
25. Alnawawi (1979) p.501
26. Alnawawi (1979) p.497
27. Alnawawi (1979) p.481

28. The Holy Quran Sura XLIX:Hujurat. verse 12.

29. The Holy Quran Sura XLIX:Hujurat. verse 12.

30. The Holy Quran Sura XLIX:Hujurat. verse 11.

31. Anawawi (1979) p.504

32. The Holy Quran Sura XXXI:Lukman. verse 18.

33. Alnawawi (1979) p.237

34. The Holy Quran Sura LXI:Saff. verses 2-3

35. The Holy Quran Sura III:Al-i-Imran. verse 188.

36. The Holy Quran Sura XXII:Hajj. verse 30.

37. The Holy Quran Sura XXV:Furqan. verse 72.

38. The Holy Quran Sura LXVII:Mulk. verse 15.

39. The Holy Quran Sura XVIII:Kahf. verse 7.

40. The Holy Quran Sura LIII:Najm. verse 39.

41. The Holy Quran Sura IX:Tuba. verse 105.

42. The Holy Quran Sura XVIII:Kahf. verse 103.

43. Alnawawi (1979) p.215

44. Alhashimi (1990) p.94

45. The Holy Quran Sura III:Al-i-Imran. verse 134.

46. Alnawawi (1979) p.245

47. The Holy Quran Sura LXX:Maarij. verse 5.

48. The Holy Quran [illegible] Sura LXXIII:Muzzammil.verse 10 p.1634

49. The Holy Quran [illegible] Sura XV:Hijr. verse 85 p.652

50. The Holy Quran [illegible] Sura LXXXIX:Fajr.verses 27-30 p.1735

51. The Holy Quran Sura IV:Nisa. verse 32.

53. The Holy Quran Sura VII:Araf. verses 31-32

54. Alhashimi (1990) p.42

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